

Unlock the door of your imagination and step into twisted reality. These stories are provided by 'real' news agencies, and most probably happened - but judge for yourself.

The Birds 1

A 29-year-old fisherman from Reading, England, suffered brain damage and was critically ill on a life support machine after being attacked by a swan. The bird also attacked a rescue nurse and fireman.

Closer to home, a man was walking his pet chihuahua near Port Hacking in Sydney when a pelican swooped down and plucked it from the ground. The owner received such a fright that he dropped the lead and the pelican flew off, with only the dog's lead visible from its beak.

Fish Eats Dog

A fisherman's dog was swallowed by a giant pike while swimming across a river in northern Siberia to join its master.

The fisherman cast his net a few moments later and caught the six-foot long fish, which had the dog's tail protruding from its jaws. When he cut the fish open, the dog struggled out, apparently no worse for having been eaten.



Beating the Taxman

An ancient form of tax evasion has been resurrected in China, the country that invented taxation thousands of years ago. *China Legal News* reports a wave of violent attacks on State tax collectors.

In Fujian Province over a hundred tax officers were beaten up in the last 12 months while in Liaoning Province there were 120 attacks between early last year and May this year.

Similar cases have occurred in other provinces. In Nanjing, in Jiangsu Province, when a group of itinerant pedlars was asked to pay taxes, they responded by gathering together hundreds of people and beating up the tax collectors with clubs.

In Shanxi Province, a tax official who inspected a restaurant's books was later beaten up in his office with iron bars, bottles and bricks by the friends of the restaurant owner. The official's assistant was stabbed.

The government held a mass rally to expose the "crimes of the tax evaders", and to propagate the tax regulations.

"Fines are not enough. Sterner punishment is necessary for those who try to evade paying taxes," the *China Legal News* said, blaming the assaults on "lawless people obsessed with money".

Prehistoric Rock Eaters

A Soviet academic has come up with a new theory to explain why prehistoric mammals died out. Professor Vasil Bogatov told *Soviet Weekly* that mammals like the mammoth, the woolly rhino and the cave bear died out, not from lack of food, but from lack of rocks. Professor Bogatov believes the soft-footed mammals ate stones to get essential minerals. When the ice sheets spread in the late Pleistocene era, the mammals were unable to prise the stones out of the frozen ground. They died from mineral deficiency, while their hard-hoofed companions - like deers and horses - managed to survive by digging the stones out.

Allah's Revenge

Two giant porcupines roamed a city street in Khoramabad in Western Iran, terrorising poultry and locals.

The porcupines barged into traffic, killing chickens they speared on their 40cm spines. Residents stoned them to death.

Famous Last Words

Nell Cassady, whose famous adventures are chronicled in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, was counting the ties on a railway line in Mexico when he was run over by a train. His last words were "64,928".

Ken Kesey, who related the story in the newly released *Demon Box* believes doggedly in the values of LSD, although he's wary of drugs such as heroin and cocaine. "It gives you more compassion," he said in Adelaide of LSD recently, adding that the trouble with Ronald Reagan was that he didn't use enough pot.



The Birds 2

A plumber from Umina on the NSW central coast took a step backwards when he saw a kookaburra drop something from on high. But it was not what he anticipated, but in fact an aggressive male funnel-web spider landing half a metre in front of him. He now has the spider safely in a pickle jar.

Buddhism Goes Commercial

The Japanese have developed a useful item for American consumption - sound-activated household shrines. By clapping your hands for example, little doors open in the miniature shrine revealing a miniature altar, which lights up and plays a recorded prayer. So far these technoshrines come only in Shinto and Buddhist models, but the patent does not exclude commercial religious practices more familiar to the American market.

Lovers Leap

A male kangaroo at a zoo near Milan in Italy committed suicide after his companion died. She broke one of her legs in a fall and zoo officials destroyed her. The joey she was carrying in her pouch also died in the fall.

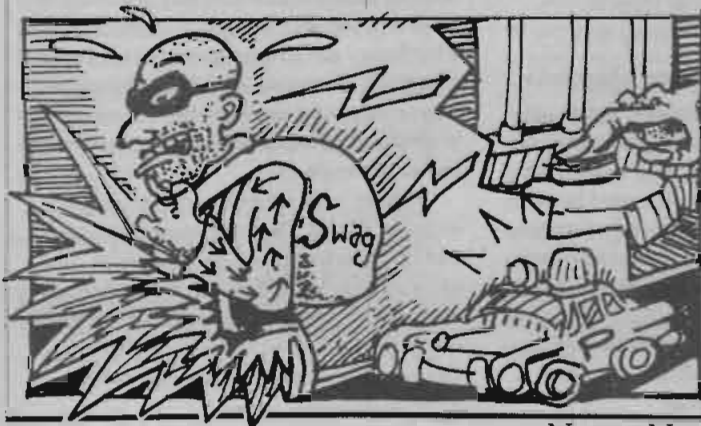
The male, unable to cope with her death, went into a severe depression and joined her by leaping off the same wall the following day.

Exploding Money

A bank robber in Oakland, California, suffered second and third degree burns to his genitals when the bundle of cash he stole exploded in his trousers. The booby trap containing tear gas and a brightly coloured dye was detonated by microwave from the bank.

Police just laughed when they caught him, although he was in excruciating pain.

Daniel Cenealra, 27, was denied medical treatment, and is suing the bank for \$2 million.



Rapist Foiled

A London woman avoided being raped by a man holding a knife to her throat while he struggled for 15 minutes trying to put on a condom. The man fled when he failed to get it on, presumably because he was afraid of catching AIDS.

Throwing Bull

A New Zealand farmer subdued an enraged bull by jamming his fingers up its nose. Last year Joe Kauika, 35, from the town of Taihape on Central North Island, took on the 300 kg animal as it gored his 69-year-old workmate.

Government House said he shoved his fingers in its flaring nostrils, grabbed one of its horns and threw it on its back even though it was three times his weight. He has won a bravery award from the Queen.

Real Estate One, Ground Zero

Bizarre contingency plans for managing the period after a nuclear attack have emerged in the United States and Great Britain. In Washington DC, the Federal Emergency Management Association ("FEMA") has a \$US1.5 billion proposal for state and local officials to rush to specially built shelters carrying land records so that nuclear war survivors can "retain and demonstrate ownership" of property that is not destroyed.

The plan has also placed a new emphasis on volunteers and self-help by ordinary citizens who are expected to "assume greater responsibility for their survival protection".

For over 10 years the British Home Office has had plans



for government officials to take control over who will live or die and would even supervise survivor's lovemaking. Millions of contraceptives would be allocated and a total ban on births is envisaged for a considerable time after a nuclear attack because of the likelihood of birth defects.

Psychologists have emphasized the need to enforce strict control of repopulating Britain because they say sexual activity would increase as people were brought together, both physically and emotionally, in the wake of such an emergency.

Bawa's Stand for Peace

Bawa Amrutanandgiri, a 20-year-old from Sabarmati village in Gujrat, India, has remained standing in the one spot since November last year as "penance" for world turmoil. His feet have become swollen and callused. He sleeps upright and occasionally leans forward onto a padded swing which hangs from a tree.

Mark of the Beast

Professor Reto Scholl has suggested in a Swiss newsletter that males who test positive to the AIDS virus should be tattooed on their penises. He said the mark would be visible only if sex took place and couldn't lead to a person being ostracised.

Chooks In Space

Soviet scientists have designed incubators for hatching chicks in spacecraft so cosmonauts can eat roast chicken in flight.

Each incubator has two chambers. In the first, eggs are placed for 20 days in an artificial gravitational field and a mechanism imitates the movements of a mother hen, constantly changing the eggs' position.

They are then transferred to the second chamber for hatching, where they grow up, free floating and weightless.

The Soviet news agency, Tass, said: "More than 200 chickens were hatched into adult hens. All of them proved very tasty."

But were they free-range?

So Long, & Thanks For All the Fuel

When Doug Youngs attempted to start his 1946 vintage restored aircraft in a hayfield 80 km from Syracuse in New York State, he forgot he had left the throttle open. The plane took off without him.

He clung on desperately to the tail for 50 metres as the plane picked up speed but he let go when the plane lifted off the ground. It banked in widening circles, making a full rotation of the field and disappeared into the distance. The 1946 Hornica Champ had enough fuel to keep flying for an hour and was last seen buzzing along at an altitude of 900 metres.